Literary Celebrity and Late Style: Anna Akhmatova's Unfinished Cinema Scenario, 'On Pilots, or the Blind Mother'

i. Introduction

This article explores literary celebrity in relation to Edward Said's understanding of 'late style', the term he borrows from Theodor Adorno to describe the 'new idiom' that the production and thought of 'great artists' can acquire as they anticipate the nearing end of their lives.[1] Late style perhaps does not have an immediately obvious bearing on the study of literary celebrity, which centres on the media and social processes that allow particular authors to become publicly visible and/or identifies the self-fashioning strategies writers adopt to position themselves in the cultural field.[2] However, the phenomena of literary celebrity and late style can productively be considered in conjunction because they share a fundamental concern with authors as physical, bodied individuals, the human subjects and faces behind literary texts, and both can have a bearing on textual aesthetics. Late style describes the distinctive ways in which authors' awareness of their bodily deterioration and mortality impacts upon their creative thinking and the aesthetics of the works they produce.[3] Similarly, as Tom Mole points out, celebrity can be 'folded back into literary creation' and thus bear upon creativity and production.[4] Jonathan Goldman concurs that 'the aesthetic of the

[1] On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain, London, 2006, p. 6.

[2] See, for instance, Jonathan Goldman, Modernism is the Literature of Celebrity, Austin, TX, 2011; Joe Moran, Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America, London and Sterling, VA, 2000; Loren Glass, Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980, New York and London, 2004; John Raeburn, Fame Became of Him: Hemingway As Public Writer, Bloomington, IN, 1984; Tom Mole, Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy, Basingstoke and New York, 2007; Karen Leick, Gertrude Stein and the Making of an American Celebrity, New York, 2009.

[3] On late style, see Karen Painter and Thomas Crow (eds), Late Thoughts: Reflections on Artists and Composers at Work, Los Angeles, CA, 2006.

[4] Mole, p. 20.

literary text itself' can be considered as 'a product of and participant in the larger cultural imperative to produce celebrity'.[5]

Said does not explicitly discuss late style in connection with celebrity or fame, but he deals primarily with canonical figures whose achievements were publicly recognized in their lifetimes, including Thomas Mann, Richard Strauss, Jean Genet, Luchino Visconti, and Mozart. This selection raises the possibility that, along with physical ageing and awareness of the proximity of death, fame itself -- as an event or condition with potential to produce a deep-seated concern with reputation and legacy at the perceived end of a career -- might be a factor with a discernible influence on the development of late style.

This possibility will be investigated here through an examination of a draft cinema scenario by Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) which sets it in the context of her later production more generally. Known as 'O letchikakh, ili slepaia mat' ('On pilots, or the Blind Mother'), it was begun late in Akhmatova's life and abandoned in the early planning stages.[6] The extant fragments were written between 9 January and 24 May 1963, and Lidiia Chukovskaia records that the poet read them to the film actor Aleksei Batalov and others on 26 May.[7] After that, the scenario ceases to figure in either Akhmatova's notebooks or Chukovskaia's diaries; nor is it mentioned in Batalov's brief memoir of Akhmatova.[8] It has gone virtually without scholarly exegesis, presumably largely because it exists in

[5] Goldman, Modernism, p. 5.

[6] The existing draft is located in notebooks 13 and 17, Zapisnye knizhki Anny Akhmatovoi (1958-1966), ed. K. N. Suvorovoi, Moscow and Turin, 1996, pp. 280-81, 353-58 and 368. Akhmatova does not give the scenario a title, but the editors of the Ellis Lak edition of her work refer to it as 'O letchikakh, ili slepaia mat'': Anna Akhmatova, Sobranie sochinenii, ed. S. A. Kovalenko, 8 vols, Moscow, 1998–2004, 3, pp. 294-303.

[7] Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi, 3 vols, Moscow, 2013, 3, p. 53.

[8] 'Riadom s Akhmatovoi', Neva, 3, 1984, pp. 155-64.

the form of draft fragments, so that analysis can necessarily only be provisional and speculative.[9] The lack of supporting extra-literary material in memoirs might also act as a disincentive – Roman Timenchik's substantial, copiously detailed study of Akhmatova in the last decade of her life barely mentions the scenario, thereby confirming the paucity of available information.[10] It is also conceivable that the scholarly silence is a perplexed one – the scenario is an odd, incongruous piece of writing.

Said regards late style as connected with a specific 'human episode' or 'problematic': 'the last or late period of life, the decay of the body, the onset of ill health or other factors that even in a younger person bring on the possibility of an untimely end'.[11] The final stage in a writer's career does not therefore automatically constitute late style, which involves a perceptible shift in idiom that both accompanies and is generated by an awareness of ageing and the proximity of death. Akhmatova wrote the last fragment of her scenario roughly a month before she turned 74, when she was experiencing the debilitating effects of 'illness and the exhaustion of old age' following heart attacks and periods of convalescence in sanatoria.[12] She had suffered episodes of poor health throughout her life -- asthma, tuberculosis, typhus, a thyroid disorder, significant heart problems (including heart attacks), and her sparse correspondence makes frequent references to long periods of illness -- but the late 1950s and 1960s brought a marked deterioration in her physical condition and increasing fears about her health on her part. In a letter to Emma Gershtein of the summer of 1958, she writes:

[9] An article by T. A. Pakhareva deals with it in some detail, but leaves a number of its main intertexts and principal themes unexplored: 'Prapamiat' v kadre (nezavershennyi kinostsenarii o letchikakh v mifopoeticheskom kontekste pozdnego tvorchestva A. Akhmatovoi)', Anna Akhmatova: epokha, sud'ba, tvorchestvo. Krymskii Akhmatovskii nauchnyii sbornik, 5, Simferopol', 2007, pp. 53-64.

[10] Anna Akhmatova v 1960-e gody, Moscow, 2005. The scenario is mentioned in passing on p. 279.

[11] Said, p. 6.

[12] Amanda Haight, Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage,New York and London, 1976, p. 168.

> It's not so easy to answer your question about my health. First, as you know, I've just turned seventy and that fact alone doesn't make one feel any better. Second, I'm carrying around four deadly illnesses, which nobody has ever promised to cure and each of them makes its presence known. To cut a long story short, my heart gives me trouble every day [...]. The last surgeon who examined me in Leningrad said that an operation was necessary but impossible because of the condition of my heart.[13]

Akhmatova was taken to hospital by ambulance with cardiac problems in the spring of 1960, and was hospitalised on several occasions in 1961.[14] In January 1962 she had a heart attack, and in December that year was suffering from angina.[15] A letter to her brother of June 1963 reports that 'serious heart problems and lengthy hospital stays' have 'disturbed the normal course of my life'.[16] Nadezhda Mandel'shtam records that a 'fear of death' overcame Akhmatova in her last ten years.[17] Her constant references to the subject of her own impending demise ('o blizkoi ee smerti') distressed her friend Anatolii Naiman to such an extent that in March 1964 Akhmatova promised not to raise the subject with him again.[18]

Recent scholarship has suggested that Akhmatova's decline in health was connected with concerns about her reputation that impacted upon her creative production. Galina Rylkova argues that the last decade of Akhmatova's life can be viewed as a distinct stage in her personal and poetic development that 'called for another reinvention of her Self in accordance with the new cultural and political developments' (the liberating but unstable processes of the Thaw).[19] Akhmatova 'had to

[13] My Half Century: Selected Prose, ed. Ronald Meyer, New York, 2013, p. 312.

[14] Chukovskaia, 2, pp. 464, 466-67, 475, 477, 483, and 484-85.

[15] ibid., pp. 486-87, 583-84.

[16] My Half Century, p. 326.

[17] Hope Abandoned, trans. Max Hayward, London, 1974, p. 222.

[18] Rasskazy o Anne Akhmatovoi, Moscow, 1989, pp. 156-57.

[19] The Archaeology of Anxiety, Pittsburgh, PA, 2007, p. 158.

create both a life story to fit her creative output and a creative output that would fit her newly reconstituted life story'.[20] She was receiving renewed public attention and adulation, but the 1960s were still accompanied by fear and uncertainty.[21] Rekviem (Requiem, 1935-40) had become a significant samizdat success and had been published abroad, but Chukovskaia's diaries testify to Akhmatova's constant hopes and anxieties about the prospect of its official publication.[22] All this led to the poet experiencing increasing concern about how she and her creativity – including her long period of silence – were perceived by readers, and Rylkova plausibly speculates that the 'new angst', 'extreme stress and even exhaustion' of reinvention of herself and the creative work associated with it accounted for Akhmatova's succession of heart attacks in her final years.[23] Rylkova's assessment does not, however, preclude the reverse possibility that Akhmatova's failing health was itself an important catalyzing factor in her project of self-reinvention and new stage of creative development.

The idea of 'late style' is more familiar to art historians and musicologists than to literary critics, although it has been applied recently to authors as diverse as William Shakespeare, Czesław Miłosz, and Philip Roth.[24] The concept has a long history, but gained particular currency in the nineteenth century as a product of a Romantic belief that an artist's biography ensured the coherence of his or her life's work. Critics of the late twentieth-century, under the influence of post-structuralism, perceived the conflation of life and art as methodologically risky, so that the idea of

[20] ibid., p. 162.

[21] Irina Paperno, Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams, Ithaca, NY and London, 2009, pp. 111-13.

[22] Chukovskaia, 3, p. 35.

[23] Rylkova, pp. 158 and 160.

[24] Russ Macdonald, Shakespeare's Late Style, Cambridge and New York, 2006; Ira Sadoff, 'Czesław Miłosz and the Late Style', The American Poetry Review, 36, 2007, 2, pp. 45-49; Matthew Snipe, 'Exit Ghost and the Politics of "Late Style"', Philip Roth Studies, 5, 2009, 2, pp. 189-204.

late style fell out of favour.[25] Recently, Said's writing and the 'return' of the embodied author to literary studies has generated new interest.[26] There remain reasons to be sceptical -- for instance, it might be argued that lateness is a category of reception rather than production -- but the notion that bodily deterioration can impact on an individual artist's thinking and textual aesthetics in detectable ways is a compelling and wholly feasible one. [27] As David Bethea observes in relation to Aleksandr Pushkin, it is easier to see a poet's 'mythopoeticizing consciousness' in action at moments of lived experience that are 'fraught' and 'heightened by fear and anxiety'.[28] The Thaw period presents such a moment in Akhmatova's biography and, as Karen Painter suggests, 'one paradigmatic quality of lateness arises from the thematization of the self – that is, a sense of one's significance and vulnerability', so that old age may raise 'spectres of doubt about creative integrity as an artist becomes aware of inevitable physical and mental decay'.[29] This chimes with, but differently inflects, Rylkova's assessment of Akhmatova's last years.

The factors mentioned by Painter -- 'creative integrity' and 'significance' -- relate closely to literary celebrity insofar as they are associated with reception and public reputation. The study of celebrity is rapidly gaining traction as a significant scholarly field in proportion to the extent to which celebrity is 'an ever more powerful force for structuring public information and private imagination', but its literary manifestations remain less well theorized than other forms.[30] This article aims to

[25] Karen Painter, 'On Creativity and Lateness', in Late Thoughts, pp. 1-11 (p. 5).

[26] See, for instance, Seán Burke, The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, Edinburgh, 1998; Painter, 'On Creativity', p. 7.

[27] Stuart Taberner, Aging and Old-Age Style in Günter Grass, Ruth Klüger, Christa Wolf, and Martin Walser: The Mannerism of a Late period, Rochester, NY, 2013, p. xli.

[28] The Superstitious Muse: Thinking Russian Literature Mythopoetically, Boston, MA, 2009, p. 228.

[29] Painter, 'On Creativity', p. 6.

[30] Mole, p. xiv. The journal Celebrity Studies, established in 2010, has published relatively few articles on literary celebrity, but see Rebecca Braun, 'Fetishising Intellectual Achievement: the Nobel Prize and European

contribute to understanding of literary celebrity by bringing the cinema scenario into focus from the far peripheral vision of Akhmatova scholarship and establishing it both as an example of late style and a key text for exploring the poet's preoccupation with fame. It demonstrates that the scenario can be read productively as an expression of Akhmatova's anxieties, as she was conscious of the approaching end of her life, about the personal cost of constructing a public image and about her future reputation. The text also constitutes a reflection on the phenomenon of celebrity in the Soviet context more broadly, and thus provides a useful prism for bringing theoretical discourses about literary celebrity to the Russian context. [31]

An authorial annotation indicates that the theme of fame offers a productive way in to analysis. Akhmatova enjoins herself to 'Work out what the main thing is. (Not fame, not fear), i.e., which line and what still needs to be done for it'.[32] This elliptical, shorthand note is ambiguous. It could suggest on the one hand that fame and fear were not themes that the poet intended to develop further (although it implies that they are already important 'lines'). On the other hand, it is conceivable that the words 'Not fame, not fear' (Ne slava, ne strakh) belonged to a fragment of text that was forming in Akhmatova's mind and was jotted down as a mnemonic: the fact that negation is such a distinctive feature of her later poetics lends credence to this possibility.[33] Whatever the

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Literary Celebrity', Celebrity Studies, 2, 2011, 3, pp. 320-34; A. Ohlsson, T. Forslid, and A. Steiner, 'Literary Celebrity Reconsidered', Celebrity Studies, 5,2014, 1-2, pp. 32-44. The founding theoretical texts on celebrity focus principally on television, film, and popular music in Anglophone culture: Chris Rojek, Celebrity, London, 2001; P. David Marshall, Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture, Minneapolis, MN, 1997; Richard Dyer, Stars, London, 1998.

[31] Studies of celebrity in Russia are beginning to emerge, but they are largely restricted to its post-Soviet forms. See, for instance Helena Goscilo and Vlad Strukov (eds), Celebrity and Glamour in Contemporary Russian Culture: Shocking Chic, Philadelphia, PA, 2010.

[32] Zapisnye knizhki, p. 358. Translations throughout are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[33] Alexandra Harrington, The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova: Living in Different Mirrors, London, 2006, pp. 155-66.

case, the theme of fame – which is closely interrelated with that of fear (and of death) – figures strongly in the draft scenario.

This article uses the terms ‘celebrity’ and ‘fame’ largely interchangeably, principally because the Russian term slava encompasses both ephemeral immediate fame (celebrity), and fame that is more lasting or substantial, and is used by Akhmatova to refer to both of these.[34] However, their usage in the present discussion also reflects shades of potential distinction between the terms 'fame' and 'celebrity' as they are employed by Anglophone critics. Most commentators regard celebrity as connected with mass media technologies of reproduction and as a contemporaneous phenomenon, arising during the lifetime of the famous individual.[35] Although there are significant areas of overlap and ambiguity between the two terms, fame, unlike celebrity, need not involve public interest and affective investment in the famous individual’s personality and private life: it ‘requires no immediacy of presence and no emotional response’.[36]

ii. Scenario synopsis

Akhmatova's scenario concerns a certain Staff Lieutenant Colonel, ‘N.’, who possesses a chance resemblance to a famous heroic pilot, ‘K.’ or 'Igor' K.'. N., who is obsessed with K. to the

[34] For instance, in her lyrics 'Zemnaia slava kak dym' ('Earthly fame is like smoke', 1914) and 'Kto znaet, chto takoe slava!’ ('Who knows what fame is', 1943). On overlaps and distinctions, see the discussion of the terms ‘fame’ and ‘celebrity’ in Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi, ‘Introduction’, in Constructing Charisma: Celebrity, Fame, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe, ed. Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi, New York, 2010, pp. 1-17 (pp. 6-7).

[35] Rojek, p. 13; Ohlsson, Forslid, and Steiner, p. 35; Clara Tuite, ‘Tainted Love and Romantic “Literary Celebrity”’, ELH, 74, 2007, 1, pp. 59-88 (pp. 62 and 81). See also Leo Braudy, ‘Knowing the Performer from the Performance: Fame, Celebrity, and Literary Studies’, PMLA, 126, 2011, 4, pp. 1070-75 (pp. 1073 and 1075).

[36] Berenson and Giloi, p. 9.

point where he begins to think of himself as K.'s alter ego, embarks upon a strange double life, posing as K. by studying his gait and mannerisms, even learning how to fly an aeroplane. He schemes to lure K. to a forest, in which some mysterious 'documents' are buried, and murders him. During their struggle, K. wounds N. in the eye. This injury, combined with his lack of skill as a pilot, causes N. to crash-land his plane and break his leg. He is then sent, having been taken for K. himself, to K.'s home town -- where he receives a hero's public welcome -- in order to recuperate. He feigns loss of memory to facilitate his assumption of K.'s identity.

In the meantime, K.'s wife, Varia, has compromised herself by falling in love with another man, Vasia, whom she takes into her home and nurses to health (Akhmatova indicates that he has been seriously injured, presumably in battle). Varia, upon the return of the false K., pretends to recognise him, despite realising that he is an imposter, viewing acknowledgement of him as her husband as a possible means of salvation from her predicament. K.'s blind mother is also not taken in by the false K., who attempts to poison her.

In other fragments, Akhmatova sketches out part of a 'Prehistory' involving N. He is sent as a young man to bury some documents in a forest for money (presumably those that were hidden where K. was killed). He needs them, Akhmatova suggests, in order to realize his ambitions for a 'beautiful life'.[37]

Further scenes involve a female character, Ania, a typist who is obsessed with the famous hero-pilot, K. N. manages to deceive her into thinking that he is the real K. but, as Ania describes admiringly how K. looped the loop and flew low under a bridge, N. becomes violent. Ania realises that N. is a fraud and he tries to kill her, but is interrupted.

Final notes on plotting indicate that N. manages to initiate Ania into his secrets and gain her complicity, coercing her into stealing a sample of K.'s handwriting for him. Some brief, elliptical

[37] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 298.

jottings indicate that a holy fool was to identify N., and that N. was to inform upon Vasia, K.'s wife's lover, in order to prevent his own exposure as an imposter.

iii. Poema bez geroia and late style

Michael Wood points out that late style cannot be the direct result of aging or impending death, since style is not itself 'a mortal creature, and works of art have no organic life to lose'. However, he continues, 'the approaching death of the artist gets into the works all the same, and in many different ways'.[38] He describes the conditions for the 'special sense of lateness' examined by Said as follows:

> Death does sometimes wait for us, and it is possible to become deeply aware of its waiting. The quality of time alters then, like a change in the light, because the present is so thoroughly shadowed by other seasons: the revived or receding past, the newly unmeasurable future, the unimaginable time beyond time.[39]

These remarks are strikingly suggestive of the sensibility of Akhmatova's late poetics, and in particular of her Poema bez geroia (Poem Without a Hero, 1940-66), to which, as T. A. Pakhareva and Marina Serova point out, Akhmatova's scenario is closely related.[40] The poem, which Akhmatova revised and added to obsessively between 1940 and her death in 1966, displays a range of features that invite consideration in relation to late style: the ghosts of the distant past visit an 'author' character, lateness and old age are constantly thematized. Akhmatova writes:

> Только как же можно случиться,

[38] 'Introduction', in Said, pp. xi-xix (p. xiii).

[39] ibid., p. xi.

[40] Pakhareva, p. 53; Serova, 'Teatr slova Anny Akhmatovoi' <http://www.akhmatova.org/articles/serova9.htm> [accessed 10 December 2015].

Что одна я из них жива?[41]

[How could it happen/That I am the only one of them still alive?]

She describes the impetus for the poem as the speaker's descent into the vaults of memory:

Из года сорокового,

Как с башни, на все гляжу.

Как будто прощаюсь снова

С тем, с чем давно простилась,

Как будто перекрестилась

И под темные своды схожу.[42]

[From the fortieth year/ As from a tower, I look at everything./ As though I were saying goodbye again/ To that to which I had long since bid farewell,/As though I were crossing myself/And descending into dark vaults.]

Different temporal layers are brought together, the author's youthful self appears as a character, and death is repeatedly alluded to:

Как в прошедшем грядущее зреет,

Так в грядущем прошлое тлеет --

Страшный праздник мертвой листвы.[43]

[As the future ripens in the past,/So the past rots in the future --/A frightening festival of dead leaves.]

[41] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 173.

[42] ibid., p. 170.

[43] ibid., p. 174.

This all conforms to a broader nostalgic, retrospective sensibility that permeates much of Akhmatova's later work.[44] A passage from her autobiographical prose (1957) expresses a pronounced sense of lateness, awareness of 'death's waiting', and the insistent intrusions of the past into the present:

> And who would have believed that I was fated to live so long and why didn't I know it? My memory has become unbelievably sensitive. I'm surrounded by the past and it is demanding something from me. But what? The dear shades of the distant past are practically talking to me. Perhaps for them it's the last chance for bliss, which people call oblivion, to pass by. Words spoken a half century ago, which I did not recall once during these fifty years, are surfacing from somewhere. It would be strange to explain away all of this as merely my summer solitude and the nearness to nature, which, for a long time now, has reminded me only of death.[45]

The most prominent features of the kind of late style that interests Said are not coherence and resolution -- 'reconciliation and a kind of restful summing up of a long productive career' -- but rather intransigence, difficulty, unresolved contradiction, the impression of unfinishedness, unsynthesized fragmentariness, anachronism, anomaly and backwardness.[46] Late style, as Said conceives it, consists of a burst of energy that 'overturns our ideas and experiences about the coherence, organic completeness, the wholeness of the work' and which is characterised by

[44] Henrik Birnbaum observes that 'the motif of death holds a central place in the overall thematic range of Achmatova's lyrical output', but that poems that 'primarily deal with the poet's own anticipated or otherwise sensed death' all date from 1939 and after: 'Face to Face with Death: On a Recurrent Theme in the Poetry of Anna Achmatova', Scando-Slavica, 28, 1982, pp. 5-17 (p. 9).

[45] My Half Century, p. 15.

[46] Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, Edward Said, London and New York, 2009, p. 135; Said, p. 7.

experimentation, ‘variation and multiplicity’.[47] It involves ‘a nonharmonious, nonserene tension, and above all, a sort of deliberately unproductive productiveness going against…’.[48]

In many respects, late style overlaps with what art historians call ‘old age style’ – broadly, a liberation from convention that produces fragmentation, openness, a ‘going beyond’.[49] Stuart Taberner adapts the term 'old-age style' to literature, applying it to the aesthetic strategies used by ageing writers in 'past-oriented works of literary life review', defining this as a 'form of storytelling which selects from the remembered past, reworks events, and narrates meaning'.[50] Poema manifests and even epitomizes features both of late style and of old-age style (which, as Taberner notes, can overlap) in various ways. It reflects on twentieth-century Russian history and Akhmatova's own biography, reworks past events (by creating composites of biographical prototypes and conflating or fictionalizing situations concerning them), and attempts to come to an understanding of the relationship of the distant past to the present. It is amorphous and sprawling, generically indeterminate, flouting literary conventions, existing constantly in flux and in multiple versions, resisting finalization, and it is accompanied by a vast paratextual apparatus and a body of related prose that has an unclear status in relation to the main text and is full of contradictions and tensions.

Akhmatova seems to have set herself the deliberate task of writing something unlike the early lyric miniatures for which she was best known, and she highlights the differences in terms which emphasize anomaly, difficulty, and a ‘going against':

Я -- тишайшая, я -- простая,

"Подорожник", "Белая стая"...

[47] Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, p. 135.

[48] Said, p. 7.

[49] Taberner, p. 24.

[50] ibid., pp. 210 and 20.

Оправдаться...но как, друзья?[51]

[I -- quietest one, I -- the simple one,/"Plantain", "White Flock"…/I must justify myself...but how, friends?]

Akhmatova mentions that many readers perceived her Poema as the 'betrayal of some former "ideal"' or as the 'unmasking' (razoblachenie) of her early poems.[52] She continually solicited new opinions about Poema, and claims that the 'conflict with readers' energized her creatively: 'So, for the first time in my life, instead of a sweet stream, I encountered the frank indignation of readers; naturally I was inspired by this.'[53]

In many ways, Akhmatova's creative self-reinvention and pushing against her earlier manner implicitly respond to critics from the past who had accused her of repeating herself, and urged her to broaden her themes.[54] She was aware that she was associated primarily with the pre-Revolutionary era and that the fact that her career included a long period of silence presented dangers for her reputation:

> And this is what I find out about myself in the foreign press. It turns out that I quit writing poetry altogether after the Revolution and that I did not write again until 1940. But why weren't my books reprinted and why was my name mentioned only in the context of vulgar abuse? Evidently the desire to irrevocably immure my name in the 1910s has an irresistible power and some temptation I fail to comprehend.[55]

[51] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 194.

[52] My Half Century, p. 130.

[53] ibid., pp. 128 and 130.

[54] Rylkova, p. 87.

[55] My Half Century, p. 21. See Rylkova, p. 162 on the strategies Akhmatova employed to address and account for her silences, which included backdating poems or claiming to have recovered 'lost' ones.

Elsewhere, she contradicts herself by providing an explanation: 'It's completely understandable why the foreigners have taken this bait. It was too tempting to proclaim that the Revolution had finished off a young talent'.[56]

Given that she was persistently dismissed in the Soviet era as an outdated symbol of pre-Revolutionary culture, the sustained reflection on the 1910s that takes place in Akhmatova's later works constituted an audacious – even perverse – way of reinventing herself. Anachronism, one of the defining characteristics of late style for Said, is a pronounced feature of Poema, which in many respects constitutes a daringly anomalous throwback to past Russian modernist idioms. The first part, 'Deviat'sot trinadtsatyi god', essentially presents a summation and evaluation of early Russian modernist culture by combining a range of typical, but long-outmoded, modernist motifs, themes, and techniques as its means of expression. The text both demonstrates and parodies modernist poetics, exceeding modernism and establishing a distance from it in a way that effects a transition to early postmodernism.[57]

According to Akhmatova, many contemporary readers were disappointed and bemused by the poem's anachronisms. She records Marina Tsvetaeva's reaction to the first part ('One needs to possess great courage in order to write about Columbine, Pierrot and Harlequin in 1941'), observing that it 'probably seemed to her an unforgivable old-fashioned imitation', but insisting that this is a misapprehension:

> Time has shown that it is not so. Time has worked upon Poem Without a Hero. Over the last 20 years, something amazing has happened; that is, before our very eyes an almost complete renaissance of the 1910s is taking place. This strange process still isn't over now. The post-Stalin youth and foreign scholar-Slavists alike are full of interest in

[56] My Half Century, p. 56.

[57] See Harrington, pp. 200-28.

> the pre-revolutionary years. [...] I say all this in connection with my poem, because, while remaining a historical poem, it is very close to the contemporary reader.[58]

Poema displays the paradoxical combination of backwardness and newness that Said connects with late style, 'returning' to the literary and cultural past in a way that anticipated the sensibility that engendered a revival of early modernism in the 1960s, bringing the pre-Revolutionary Silver Age 'back into the mainstream of [...] Russian culture' and creating the conditions for Russian postmodernism.[59] Said's characterisation of late style masterpieces is wholly apposite: they are 'late to the extent that they are beyond their own time, ahead of it in terms of daring and startling newness, later than it in that they describe a return or homecoming to realms forgotten or left behind by the relentless advancement of history'. He continues:

> Literary modernism itself can be seen as a late style phenomenon insofar as artists such as Joyce and Eliot seem in a way to have been out of their time altogether, returning to ancient myth or antique forms such as the epic or ancient religious ritual for their inspiration. Modernism has come to seem paradoxically not so much a movement of the new as a movement of aging and ending.[60]

Akhmatova's poem, as part of its demonstration of modernism, draws extensively on ancient myth and religious ritual, and has a myth-making thrust: Akhmatova acts as a bricoleur, combining heterogeneous fragments of prior discourses in a kind of 'anthological montage'.[61] However, the poem not only mythologizes an era, but becomes an essential element in Akhmatova's own late self-

[58] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, pp. 241 and 254-55.

[59] Rylkova, p. 19.

[60] Said, p. 135.

[61] See David Wells, 'Folk Ritual in Anna Akhmatova's Poema bez geroya', Scottish Slavonic Review, 7, 1986, pp. 69-88; Roman Timenchik, 'K semioticheskoi interpretatsii "Poemy bez geroia"', Trudy po snakovym sistemam, 6, 1973, pp. 438-42; Dubravka Oraić, 'Avangard i postmodern', Russian Literature, 36, 1994, pp. 95-114.

mythologizing and self-reinvention, highlighting the shift she makes from femme fatale to grande dame of Russian literature, asserting her unique position in Russian culture as survivor of the lost pre-Revolutionary past, authoritative vehicle of collective memory, and bearer of cultural tradition. The poem is crucial to her creative identity in this respect, crowning her career with a mature masterpiece that gives it a coherent shape.

Poema also marks a shift in the ways in which Akhmatova's poetry can be seen to engage with the culture of celebrity. In her early collections, following and adapting the example of Blok, whose poetry was conceived as a kind of lyric diary, inculcating the public into a particular way of reading, she established a Romantic 'hermeneutic of intimacy' (as Mole calls it in his study of Byron), a reading paradigm that encouraged identification of the speaker with the poet herself, creating the impression that the poems were unmediated, intimate confessions in which Akhmatova revealed herself, and that they gave a form of access to an especially fascinating individual.[62] Mole suggests that biographical readings that take their cue from an authorial strategy are characteristic of celebrity culture.[63] As Jeanne van der Eng-Liedmeier observes of Akhmatova, 'The autobiographical nature of her poetic work, especially in her love lyrics, led the readers to identify the heroine with the poet herself'.[64] The early lyrics overlay revelation and concealment, presenting truncated narratives that implicitly invite readers to try to decode them but simultaneously resist this owing to the scarcity of information supplied. Although the basic strategy is neo-Romantic, Akhmatova's incipient modernist impersonality continually calls the idea that the poems are confessions into question. In 'Net, tsarevich, ia ne ta' ('No, tsarevich, I am not she', 1915), she writes:

Не подумай, что в бреду

[62] Mole, p. 24.

[63] ibid., p. 62.

[64] 'Reception as a Theme in Axmatova's Early Poetry', Dutch Contributions to the VIII International Congress of Slavists (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1979), pp. 205-31 (p. 211).

И замучена тоскою

Громко клину я беду:

Ремесло мое такое.

[Don't think that in delirium/And tortured by anguish/I will loudly proclaim calamity:/Such is my craft.]

In the same lyric, she makes reference to fame:

Славы хочешь? -- у меня

Попроси тогда совета,

Только это -- западня,

Где ни радости, ни света.[65]

[Do you want fame? -- ask me/For advice then./Only it is -- a trap,/Where there is neither joy, nor light.]

Even though her poetry tends to emphasise the negative aspects of fame for its bearer, it conforms to the logic of celebrity culture. Akhmatova's effective self-branding -- the combination of her memorable name, striking physical image, distinctive poetic manner, and her poetry's persistent focus on heroines who bore close resemblances to the poet herself -- gave her cultural visibility and made her a literary celebrity.

Poema, however, presents a different image of the speaker. Although she still resembles Akhmatova herself, she now seems to be expanded and multiple, existing at different layers of the text. By constantly thematizing its own difficulty, unintelligibility and obscurity, Poema manifests the kind of high modernist authorial 'imprimatur' (the 'stylistic stamp of its producer') or

[65] Sochineniia, ed. M. M. Kralin, 2 vols, Moscow, 1990, 1, p. 110.

exceptionalism explored respectively by Aaron Jaffe and Jonathan Goldman.[66] This does not constitute a retreat from celebrity culture on Akhmatova's part, but rather marks a different stage of it. Jaffe detects a kinship 'between modernism's exaggerated forms of authorial immanence and the exaggerating work of publicity, promotion, and celebrity'.[67] Goldman, similarly, argues that modernist texts operate like celebrity in that they generate an image of the authorial figure as 'unique, larger-than-life personality, a choreographer of disparate discourses and repository of encoded meaning', and as an 'exceptional personality available to popular culture'. Modernist style, he suggests, makes the author not only art object, but also the master choreographer of the culture which contains him or her. Literary high modernism and early twentieth-century mass cultural celebrity are not, therefore, separate aspects of culture but, rather, 'mutually constitutive' ones, 'two sides of the same cultural coin'. They both have a common project, in that they each act to elevate, and reaffirm the primacy of, the individual.[68] Goldman suggests that modernist literature and popular cinema (the most visible manifestation of celebrity culture in the modernist era) both share manifest 'what we might call the cultural logic of celebrity', so that we can 'conceptualize the relationship between these supposedly divergent spheres of culture as more of a collaboration than a parting of the ways'.[69]

iv. Cinema in Akhmatova's Later Work

Brian McHale notes that an affinity for cinema is shared by modernism and postmodernism, but that there is a difference in how it manifests itself.[70] Modernist works typically treat cinema as a

[66] Jaffe, Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity, Cambridge, 2005, p. 20; Goldman, Modernism.

[67] Jaffe, p. 16.

[68] Modernism, p. 2.

[69] ibid., pp. 2-3.

[70] Postmodernist Fiction, London and New York, 2001, p. 128.

source for new techniques of representation: Akhmatova's early poetry is a case in point. It is highly visual, predominantly metonymic, concerned principally with conveying psychological reality and the workings of memory -- to that end, it employs 'cinematic' techniques such as montage and flashback, verbal ‘close-ups’ of physical gestures, and incorporates abrupt tense shifts that create an effect of simultaneity.

In postmodernist works, however, McHale suggests, cinema frequently appears as a distinct ‘ontological level’, a ‘world-within-the-world’, which is often placed 'in competition with the primary diegetic world of the text', or constitutes a ‘plane interposed between the level of verbal representation and that of the "real"'.[71] Cinematic discourse therefore pervades style, and the cinematic trope is applied to the text itself, either by cinematic metaphors substituting for narration (‘cut’, ‘zoom’, ‘freezeframe’, ‘dissolve’, ‘fadeout’), or by the text being formatted like a screenplay.[72]

This distinction is somewhat schematic, but it serves well to describe the differences in the use of cinema in Poema when contrasted with Akhmatova's early lyrics. It is no longer simply a question of the poet employing ‘cinematic’ devices: there are now incipient signs of the application of the cinematic trope to the text itself. The prose sections, which look like theatrical stage directions, also resemble the scene headings of a screenplay or scenario, introducing an element of screenplay formatting. They describe shifting locations (abrupt changes of scene, like fades or dissolves), specify uses of sound (for example, ‘the sounds of Requiem’), and indicate a kind of voice-over style narration: 'The torches go out, the ceiling lowers. The white (mirrored) hall once again turns into the author's room. Words from the darkness'.[73]

The possibility of writing a cinematic version of the poem clearly appealed to Akhmatova. In one version of the libretto she observes that some readers thought it more closely resembled a

[71] ibid., p. 128.

[72] ibid., p. 129.

[73] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 177.

screenplay, and Anatolii Naiman quotes a prose fragment she gave him which expresses her intention of expanding upon the poem's excursions into both ballet and cinema.[74] Elsewhere in her prose, Akhmatova writes:

> While I was working away at what was sometimes a ballet and sometimes a screenplay, I still couldn't figure out exactly what I was doing. The following quotation clarified the matter for me: "This book may be read as a poem or verse play", writes Peter Viereck in The Tree Witch (1961)'.[75]

The poem's potential to generate 'spin-off' texts in other genres and media again brings to mind the variation, multiplicity, and experimentation that are inherent to late style in Said's analysis.[76] Although the cinematic aspects of the poem were never realized as a fully-fledged scenario, the fact that that this is a direction that Akhmatova felt the material was pushing towards is an important factor in understanding how her film scenario came about.

The scenario and Poema share a number of common features – both depict morally bankrupt characters and explore the destructive effects on personality of wearing masks and playing roles. To this end, they make extensive use of the motifs of doubles, shadows, and mirrors, in a manner strongly reminiscent of the cinema of the 1910s. On the theatrical stage in the same period, mirror effects were extremely rare ('an exception rather than the rule'), so that in 1911, when the first mirrors began to appear in Russian films, in which they soon came to feature conspicuously, they were recognised by audiences as the 'unique property' of the film medium.[77] Yury Tsivian

[74] ibid., p. 281; Naiman, pp. 132-33.

[75] My Half Century, p. 138.

[76] On this feature of the text, see T. V. Tsiv'ian, 'The Double Bottom of the Casket; or Two Hypostases of *Poema bez geroia*', in *The Speech of Unknown Eyes*, 2 vols, Nottingham, 1990, 1, pp. 113-20 (p. 116).

[77] 'Portraits, Mirrors, Death: On Some Decadent Clichés in Early Russian Films', Iris, 14-15, 1992, pp. 67-83 (pp. 70-71).

identifies certain ‘stereotype situations’ in which mirrors were particularly likely to appear: one ‘recurrent textual alliance’ was that of mirrors and death, including the showing of death scenes as seen reflected in mirrors.[78] Akhmatova includes a variation on this device in 'O letchikakh' when, as Varia is sleeping, the brightly-lit scene of the murder of her husband is displayed in a large mirror. It is possible to interpret this as a vehicle for conveying a vision or dream, another typical feature of films of the 1910s.[79] A further characteristic of early film is the prevalent motif of doubles and doublings, which crystallized around mirrors in 1913 as Russian directors became increasingly aware of the possibilities of reflections and the capacity of mirrors to double characters.[80] As Tsivian notes, mirrors came to films with their own cultural baggage: many literary doubles and doublings are accompanied by such standard accessories as shadows, magic mirrors and haunted portraits so that these were ‘often employed in the role of cinematic motifs similar to the ones found in romantic and decadent literature', and used to create 'sinister' or 'mystical' effects.[81] For example, in the scenario, Akhmatova writes: 'N. sees Igor' K. in a mirror and repeats his gestures'. Or: 'N. sees K. in a mirror. He watches how he eats, drinks, bows, smiles. He repeats his gestures, perhaps at home'. He studies his gait, manner of smoking, his laugh.[82] Akhmatova also depicts how N. loses his grip on reality as a result of his double life. He 'is frightened of his reflection - it begins to seem to him that it is not him in the mirror, but Igor' himself, saved by some kind of miracle.'[83]

The various ways in which the themes of identity, doubles, and role-playing relate to self-fashioning, authorship, and celebrity will be addressed shortly. For now, in connection with late style, it suffices to note the anachronistic properties of the text’s aesthetics.

[78] ibid., p. 73.

[79] ibid., p. 77.

[80] ibid., p. 73.

[81] ibid., pp. 69 and 75.

[82] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, pp. 301, 302 and 295.

[83] ibid., p. 302.

v. Russian theatre and the scenario

As she does in Poema, Akhmatova mixes and combines prior discourses and styles in her scenario, which appears to have been conceived in part as a revival, or parody, of Russian tragi-farcical or serio-comic drama of the 1920s.[84] It calls to mind in particular the work of Nikolai Erdman, to whom Akhmatova was close in the last decade of her life, and who wrote for the cinema once his theatrical career was brought to an enforced end.[85] Erdman's major plays, Mandat (The Warrant, 1924) and Samoubiitsa (The Suicide,1928) -- both banned in the Soviet Union until perestroika -- are political satires populated by unnaturalistic, mannequin-like characters, whose speech has a comic, vaudeville character. The mannered dialogue in Akhmatova's scenario incorporates humorous touches that are anomalous for her, but which are reminiscent of Erdman:

> (An old-fashioned gentleman in a huntsman's jersey waters the flowers with a watering can. He is deaf. A [correspondent] from the capital's newspaper comes through the gate to interview him as a neighbour of K. He expresses himself bombastically. They sit on a bench.)
>
> Cor(respondent): Wait a moment. I'll just... my glasses (searches the pockets of her trousers).
>
> Gent(leman) (gallantly): I can turn away, while you are wearing your glasses.
>
> Cor(respondent) -- (preparing to take notes): So, you remember K. from the year when power was taken by the proletariat.
>
> Gent(leman) (not having heard to the end): Pardon... by whom?[86]

[84] Kovalenko notes this relationship briefly: Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 444.

[85] See Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Against Hope, p. 327.

[86] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 301.

The scenario also invites comparison with another playwright of the 1920s, Daniil Kharms, and particularly his Elizaveta Bam (1928).[87] Like that of Erdman, Kharms's work belongs to a broad tradition of Russian drama which combines satirical, comical, tragic, and grotesque elements and can be traced back to the plays of Nikolai Gogol'.[88] Although Akhmatova does not dispense with plot to the extent that Kharms does, her sudden changes of style between the different scenes of the scenario recall his characteristic 'shifts' (sdvigi), and her characters are, like his, highly depersonalised.[89] For instance:

Varia: My dear, at last, how I've waited.

The Stranger (sits down): I'm – home. (He becomes pensive.)

Varia (pushing him towards the mother): Here's mama.

The Stranger (displeased): Whose?

Mother (shuddering): Whose voice is that?

Varia: Mama – Igor' has come back. (To the Stranger): She has gone blind.

Mother (disgustedly): It's hardly Igor'.

The Stranger: Mama wants to joke. Let me give you a sweet. Pop it straight in your mouth, please.

Mother: Put it in my hand.

[87] On Akhmatova's admiration for Kharms, see Solomon Volkov, Conversations with Joseph Brodsky: A Poet's Journey Through The Twentieth Century, trans. Marian Schwarz, New York, 2002, p. 266.

[88] Julia Listengarten, Russian Tragifarce: Its Cultural and Political Roots, London, 2000, p. 11.

[89] For a useful discussion of Kharms's play, see Jenny Stelleman, Aspects of Dramatic Communication: Action, Non-action, Interaction (A. P. Čechov, A. Blok, D. Charms),Amsterdam, 1992, pp. 120-44.

N. and Varia exit. (The Mother throws the sweet on the floor. The dog eats it and dies on the spot.)[90]

It is apparent that Akhmatova was experimenting stylistically, incorporating features of past cinematic and avant-garde theatrical styles in new combinations, attempting to create an aesthetic that drew on modernist styles antithetical to her own early idiom. It is difficult to judge the degree to which she might have been successful on the basis of the scenario as it stands – it looks, rather as the first part of Poema did to Tsvetaeva, like an idiosyncratic, anachronistic stylization -- this time, of early twentieth-century cinematography and dramaturgy. Yet, as with the use of Silver Age modernist styles in Poema, Akhmatova's resurrection of features of drama from the late 1920s period is not only backward- but also forward-looking, in that it anticipates the culture of the late 1960s, when the work of Erdman and Kharms was being rediscovered and generating interest in theatrical circles.[91] The draft scenario, like Poema, exhibits what might be termed 'late style', combining 'lateness and newness next to each other', and expressing an 'increasing sense of apartness and exile and anachronism' which it uses to 'formally sustain itself'.[92]

vi. Prose, celebrity and reputation

Akhmatova started to produce prose in an unprecedented way in the latter part of her career. This constitutes another form of 'going against', in that she indicates that prose did not come naturally: in one fragment from the 1960s, she remarks 'Prose always seemed to me both a mystery and a temptation. From the very beginning I knew everything about poetry – I knew absolutely

[90] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 297.

[91] See John Freedman, 'Introduction', in The Major Plays of Nikolai Erdman, ed. and trans. John Freedman, London and New York, 2005, pp. ix-xix (p. xiii).

[92] Said, p. 17.

nothing about prose. I was either frightened of it or hated it.'[93] Although perhaps somewhat disingenuous, this remark reveals insecurity on Akhmatova's part as to her abilities as prose writer, coupled with a high level of personal investment in the idea of becoming one. Her turn to prose coincided with a change in her working practices that facilitated it (or which it necessitated): according to the testimony of Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, Akhmatova only began to compose using notebooks in her old age.[94] In one of these, the poet writes:

> However, a book, a cousin to Safe Conduct and The Noise of Time, must come about. I'm afraid that in comparison with its elegant cousins it will seem like a grubby child, a simpleton, a Cinderella, and so forth.
>
> Both of them (Boris and Osip) wrote their books when they had just barely come of age, when everything was not a fairy tale away. But to see the 1890s from the altitude of the middle of the twentieth century is almost impossible without becoming dizzy.[95]

This passage, written in the late 1950s, exudes a sense of both belatedness (her male contemporaries wrote their books 'when they had just barely come of age') and lateness ('the altitude of the middle of the twentieth century') as well conveying the idea that writing a book of prose is an imperative at this point in her career ('must come about'). It also establishes a rivalry with her major male contemporaries, Mandel'shtam and Pasternak: the ironic, self-deprecatory tone discloses a degree of anxiety of influence even though Akhmatova implicitly belittles the 'elegant cousins' by suggesting that her task is more ambitious.

Much of Akhmatova's existing prose is directed primarily towards refuting what she saw as erroneous evaluations of either her own place in Russian literature or that of others with whom her

[93] Zapisnye knizhki, p. 675.

[94] Hope Abandoned, p. 477.

[95] My Half Century, p. 16.

name was closely associated, and consequently it frequently reflects on the topic of fame. For instance, she remarks upon how Nikolai Gumilev was being presented by foreign scholars:

> Approximately half of this worthy gang […] honestly cannot imagine what Gumilyov was really like; others […] adopt an idiotic and patronizing tone when they speak about Gumilyov; a third group consciously and deftly distort […]. And, taken together all this is probably known as fame.[96]

She was especially incensed by Georgii Ivanov's memoir Peterburgskie zimy (Petersburg Winters, 1928) in which he remarked that by the early 1920s Akhmatova had fallen out of favour with her readers, who applauded merely out of habit at her public readings. She perceived this assessment as a deliberate attempt on Ivanov's part to give her rightful 'place' to his wife Irina Odoevtseva, and remarked bitterly of his account, 'It has become the canvas of my post-revolutionary biography for the entire world.'[97]

As the melodramatic reference to 'the entire world' suggests, the stakes were high from Akhmatova's perspective. Although she was being rehabilitated at home in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and receiving increased recognition abroad, she felt vulnerable to misrepresentation -- unsurprisingly, given that in the past she had been publicly vilified repeatedly, and particularly harshly at precisely those moments when she was either at the height of her popularity (the mid-1920s) or enjoying renewed public attention after a long hiatus from the limelight (the mid-1940s). Her reputation was far from secure, her published work was incomplete, and her sense of fear remained intense.[98]

Tamara Kataeva, a popular writer who positions herself unequivocally as 'anti-Akhmatova', argues that Akhmatova seemed to accord prose special significance and interprets this as a symptom

[96] ibid., p. 115-6.

[97] My Half Century, p. 56.

[98] Paperno, p. 112.

of a megalomaniacal desire for world fame, which Akhmatova believed could be achieved chiefly through prose.[99] Kataeva suggests that Akhmatova went to considerable lengths to convince others that she could write a great work of prose, but that her 'curious, comic' attempts -- of which the scenario is Kataeva's prime example -- are abject failures that reveal this aspiration as hubristic fantasy.[100] The tendentiousness of Kataeva's view notwithstanding, her assertions about the connections between Akhmatova's prose and desire for an international reputation cannot be dismissed entirely out of hand – certainly those (exclusively male) Russian writers who had achieved celebrity and honours abroad in Akhmatova's lifetime (Lev Tolstoi, Anton Chekhov, Maksim Gor'kii, Boris Pasternak, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn) had done so on the strength of their prose, and the three (also male) Russian Nobel Laureates to date (Ivan Bunin, Pasternak, and Mikhail Sholokhov) were recognised principally for works of prose fiction. Akhmatova's evident envy of Pasternak's nomination for the Nobel Prize for Doktor Zhivago and her hopes regarding her own candidature, about which rumours began to circulate in the early 1960s, provide some support for Kataeva's interpretation.[101]

Kataeva asks scathingly:

> What kind of prose could she write? [...] She set the bar herself – the scenario about pilots. What did she know about pilots? Had she ever seen a living pilot? […] What could she write about them, which words from her vocabulary applied to pilots? If her usual ones, then what has it got to do with pilots? She "wrote" this scenario – who commissioned it? Who paid for it? […] Anything you like can be written as the result of a creative urge, except a scenario. Where had she even seen a scenario?[102]

[99] Otmena rabstva: anti-Akhmatova-2, Moscow, 2011, p. 271.

[100] ibid., p. 110.

[101] Chukovskaia, 2, pp. 524 and 526; Timenchik, 60-e gody, p. 155.

[102] Kataeva, p. 271.

As is typical of Kataeva's invective, these comments oscillate between facile and incisive. Rather more pertinent than her dismissive references to Akhmatova's 'creative urge' and lack of sufficient knowledge about pilots and aeroplanes to be entitled to write about them are the questions Kataeva raises about whether the scenario was commissioned, and what Akhmatova ultimately intended to do with it. As Kataeva implies, Akhmatova's foray into writing for cinema seems to reveal considerable naivety, despite her close association with a number of people who worked in the film industry.

vii. Celebrity pilots

Kataeva is baffled by the pilots, but their presence in the scenario can be rationalized if it is read as an examination of the phenomenon of Soviet celebrity and fame. Pilots represented the most 'legendary' profession in the Soviet Union during the Second World War, the period in which the action appears to be set.[103] During the war, pilots, known as Stalin's 'falcons' (Stalinskie sokoly), were national heroes, the subject of much celebratory, patriotic propaganda: 'Glory to Stalin's falcons!' ran a well-known wartime slogan. This nickname is alluded to in the screenplay after the arrival of the false Igor' K., when the blind mother murmurs Akhmatova's 'Kolybel'naia' ('Lullaby', 1949), which contains the lines:

Я не вижу сокола

Ни вдали, ни около.[104]

[I don't see a falcon/Either far away, or close by.]

During the 1930s, pilots such as Valerii Chkalov were popular heroes and household names, and the cult of aviation was second only to that of Stalin himself.[105] Aviation successes were used

[103] Pakhareva, p. 56.

[104] Sochineniia, 2, p. 47.

propagandistically to flaunt Soviet technological success and territorial exploration, and as a means of distracting the public from the horrors of the purges. Aviator hero cults were placed 'in dialogue' with Stalin's personality cult, generating a 'sacral double-charge'.[106] Stalin held several well-publicized meetings with pilots, such as that with Chkalov, Aleksandr Beliakov, and Georgii Baidukov, who collectively received domestic and international acclaim for pioneering achievements in 1936 and 1937, including the first trans-polar flight. Elements of Chkalov's career are built into Akhmatova's depiction of K., who loops the loop and flies under a bridge -- one of Chkalov's celebrated aerobatic feats.[107]

Akhmatova draws on the Soviet lionizing of hero-pilots prominently in her scenario. The bombastic Soviet rhetoric of fame is scattered throughout the draft text -- the aeroplane N. crashes is a 'wonder of the world', people go to the cinema 'to watch a hero', K.'s fame is loudly proclaimed everywhere ('everything thunders his glory').[108] He makes public appearances (at a club and the cinema), his portrait is hung in the streets, his hometown is renamed after him, books about him are published, a symphony is dedicated to him, there are newspaper reports on him, and a bust is put up in the square in front of a railway station.[109] These are all generic features associated with promoting an official Soviet personality cult -- and thereby manufacturing celebrity -- that correspond to Soviet reality. Prominent cases of towns being renamed after pilots were Chkalov (the name of Orenburg from 1938 to 1957) and Serov (in 1939, after Anatolii Serov). The idea of a symphony composed in honour of a pilot is reminiscent of the so-called 'Aviation Symphony' by Nikolai Miaskovskii,

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[105] On the lionizing of Chkalov, see Scott W. Palmer, Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia, Cambridge, 2009, p. 233.

[106] Jan Plamper, The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power, New Haven and London, 2012, p. 41.

[107] Chkalov died, aged 34, in a crash while piloting the prototype of a new fighter plane in the same month and year (December 1938) as Osip Mandel'shtam.

[108] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, pp. 295 and 301.

[109] ibid., pp. 295 and 296.

composed in 1935-36 and inspired by the crash in 1935 of an aircraft named after Gor'kii. Pilots were a frequent topic of popular songs and Socialist Realist paintings, such as Alexander Deineko's celebrated painting of 1937 depicting a group of children, the pilots of the future, gazing into the sky. Boris Polevoi's Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke (Story of a Real Man,1946), the account of a real-life Second World War fighter pilot who continued to fly after losing his legs, was immensely popular with Soviet readers.[110]

viii. Modigliani, modernism and celebrity

Certain biographical details connect pilots with Akhmatova's life in the 1910s, suggesting that her inspiration came not only from her experiences of Soviet life but from the insistent memories of the distant past that were part of the creative impulse for Poema. This interpretation chimes with those aspects of the text that seem particularly evocative of the pre-Revolutionary era, such as the cinematic use of mirrors and the fact that Akhmatova's poetry of that period -- specifically, '…I na stupen'ki vstretit'' ('...And they came to meet me on the steps', 1913) -- is implicitly attributed to Ania, an amateur poet. Contrary to Kataeva's assertion, Akhmatova had met a pilot in France in 1910, albeit briefly: the French aviator Louis Bleriot, who achieved world fame for his flight across the English Channel in 1909. Akhmatova told Joseph Brodsky that Bleriot left a note of his address in her shoe.[111]

Akhmatova's memoir of the artist Amedeo Modigliani (whom she met in Paris in 1910-11) -- begun while she was recuperating in a sanatorium after a heart attack and written between 1958 and 1964, the period during which she drafted her scenario -- establishes a connection between

[110] Solomon Volkov, The Magical Chorus: A History of Russian Culture from Tolstoy to Solzhenitsyn, New York, 2009, p. 167.

[111] Volkov, Conversations with Joseph Brodsky, pp. 229-30.

cinema and early aviation that provides a further possible clue to the presence of pilots in the screenplay:

> And [one of the most famous people] a not-yet risen luminary of the XX century still wandered along Paris(ian) boulevards as an unknown young man. Ch(arlie) Ch(aplin). [...] Cubism was arriving. The first aeroplanes circled uncertainly over the Eiffel Tower.[112]

She writes of Modigliani:

> He also told me that he used to be interested in aviators (nowadays: pilots), but when he got to know one of them, he was disappointed: they turned out to be merely sportsmen (what did he expect?).
>
> At that time the early light airplanes [...] which, as everyone knows resembled book-cases on legs, circled round my rusting and twisted contemporary (1889), the Eiffel Tower.[113]

In the 1910s, as Solomon Volkov remarks, flying was 'the latest thrill' both in Paris and Petersburg. He notes that Blok was a devotee of aerial displays: the poem, 'Aviator' (1912) depicts the death of a pilot that the poet witnessed.[114] It seems likely that the inspiration for the scenario arose, however obliquely, from Akhmatova's memories of Modigliani and of the pre-revolutionary years more generally, and that she combined these with later, Soviet associations of pilots.

The phenomenon of fame is a perceptible motif in Akhmatova's recollections of Modigliani. She notes that when she knew him, he 'didn't possess even a shadow of recognition as an artist', and recalls asking anyone returning from Paris for news about him, 'certain that such a person must

[112] Zapisnye knizhki, p. 436.

[113] My Half Century, p. 81.

[114] Volkov, The Magical Chorus, p. 163.

have achieved fame', only to be told that they had not heard of him (Modigliani was not successful in his lifetime and only achieved international renown posthumously).[115] She found out about Modigliani's death, she writes, in the early 1920s, from an obituary in a French art magazine: 'From it I learned that he was a great artist of the twentieth century […] and that there were already monographs about him in English and Italian'.[116] Other accounts contradict this one -- Zoia Tomashevskaia recollects that Akhmatova only learnt of Modigliani's stature as world-famous artist in 1956, upon which she promptly asked for one of his line-drawing portraits of her, which she had given to Tomashevskaia for safe-keeping, to be returned.[117]

The memoir of Modigliani is not merely an attempt to record Akhmatova's memories of him or to sketch out a historical portrait of the historical Paris in which they met. It is also a blatant exercise in self-mythologization. Akhmatova performs a double move in the memoir by writing herself into Modigliani's biography at the same time as establishing him as an important figure in her own. She effectively augments her own fame through 'self-annexation' -- as Emily Apter calls this kind of manoeuvre -- to another talented, charismatic, creative modernist, and turns 'the tradition of homage into a name-branding opportunity', a means of consolidating a 'celebrity confraternity'.[118] The fundamental principle in operation is the bolstering of Akhmatova's own reputation and the enlargement of her personal fame by association -- being linked with other well-known names renders her part of a constellation of famous figures. Apter observes that 'Any theory of fame must take full measure of the "who's who" – who the famous person was closely connected with, met with.' Reference to others can thereby be seen as a 'ticket into the pantheon of […] celebrity', so that the tribute paid is 'made in the fiduciary sense of that word, as a down payment for posterity or

[115] My Half Century, p. 82.

[116] ibid., pp. 82-83.

[117] <http://www.akhmatova.org/persons/tomashevskaja.html> [accessed 22/10/15]

[118] 'Celebrity Gifting: Mallarmé and the Poetics of Fame', in Berenson and Giloi (eds), Constructing Charisma, pp. 86-102 (p. 87).

a mortgage on future illustriousness'.[119] Jaffe uses similar fiscal analogies, likening reputations to coins, seeing the author's name as a 'type of rarefied commodity', and highlighting 'the economies of great names that circulate in modernist critical prose and elsewhere', used in the hope that some of the reputation will 'rub off'. He cites in particular the ways in which T. S. Eliot makes use of the 'coinage' of Yeats and others link their reputations to an experience of 'Joyce'.[120]

Akhmatova's poetry and prose are full of similar acts of homage that involve direct naming. In part this is because she is a 'mnemonic' poet -- her work is highly intertextual and open to tradition ('a longing for world culture').[121] However, mnemonics and intertextuality are also opportunities for name-dropping. Akhmatova's prose invokes major figures of European modernism -- not only Modigliani, but also others whom she never met but with whom she sought to associate herself: Chaplin ('perhaps the greatest celebrity during the modernist moment'), T. S. Eliot, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce.[122] It is significant that she should include Eliot, for whom an author and his significance could only be appreciated in relation to dead poets and artists: 'You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.'[123]

Akhmatova's references to famous European modernists are to some extent self-aggrandizing, but they are also an expression of political opposition, since Western high modernist literature was anathema to the Soviet literary establishment. Akhmatova's memoirs and prose fragments, in this regard, convey a poignant sense of belatedness, exile, and loss. The great works of

[119] Apter, pp. 91 and 102.

[120] Jaffe, pp. 55 and 17.

[121] Mikhail Gronas, Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory: Russian Literary Mnemonics, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.126.

[122] Jonathan Goldman, 'Modernism is the Age of Chaplin', in Modernist Star Maps: Celebrity Modernity Culture, ed. Aaron Jaffe and Jonathan Goldman, Farnham, 2010, pp. 193-206 (p. 195).

[123] 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot, ed. Frank Kermode, New York, 1975, pp. 37-44; See Jaffe, p. 55.

European modernism that she admired -- Joyce's Ulysses (1922), Eliot's 'Four Quartets' (1943), Kafka's The Trial (1925) -- had all been written years before, in a Europe from which she had been forcibly cut off since her youth. As Kathleen F. Parthé observes, writers who were not permitted to travel dreamed of journeying to Europe. She quotes Iurii Olesha, who asks, 'Is it fame that I want? No, not fame, but a trip around the world. It's even hard to imagine that there is another world.'[124]

The fact that Akhmatova was unable to visit Europe, to which she felt culturally attached, for most of her life explains the romanticized, mythical quality of her recollections of Paris. The mention of the Eiffel Tower underscores this aspect: Roland Barthes emphasises the Tower's mythical power and 'oneiric [...] function', its role in fantasy and the imagination, observing that 'it belongs to the universal language of travel' and symbolises (among other things) 'modernity', and 'communication'.[125] Akhmatova effectively not only sets herself among key European modernists in the Modigliani memoir and related prose fragments -- she also attempts to inscribe herself into world history, and to render herself a landmark of international modernity, along with the early aviation, the Eiffel Tower, Cubism, and the cinema itself.

The sense of loss, of what might have been, and the impression of exile (here not only in time but also in place) that Said associates with late style pervade Akhmatova's later work. However, this is not the 'self-imposed' exile that Said describes, but one that was externally enforced.[126] The elegy 'Menia, kak reku' ('I, like a river', 1945) describes the life the speaker might have led, had things been otherwise:

Меня, как реку,

Суровая эпоха повернула.

[124] Russia's Dangerous Texts: Politics Between the Lines, New Haven, CT, 2004, p. 151.

[125] 'The Eiffel Tower' in The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies, trans. Richard Howard, Berkeley, CA, 1997, pp. 3-17 (pp. 5, 7 and 4).

[126] Said, p. 16.

Мне подменили жизнь.

[…] Сколько я друзей

Своих ни разу в жизни не встречала,

И сколько очертаний городов

Из глаз моих могли бы вызвать слезы,

А я один на свете город знаю

И ощупью его во сне найду.[127]

[I, like a river,/Was diverted from my course by the harsh epoch./They left me with a substitute life./[...] How many of my friends/Have I not once met in my life,/And how many cities' outlines/Could have brought tears to my eyes./But I only know one city in the world/And I can find my way round it in my sleep.]

It is notable that Akhmatova's memoir makes reference to famous (again, male) modernists in the prehistory to their careers, and her own. Modigliani and she are 'not yet transformed' by the 'breath of art'. Similarly, Chaplin is an 'unknown young man whose star had not yet ascended', and Proust, Kafka, and Joyce, the 'three leviathans on which the twentieth century now rests [...] lived like men and had not yet become myths.'[128] She presents them as still anonymous, not yet objectified by fame, in a time before her life was diverted from its course, when she had a sense of agency over it. These were people she might plausibly have met, who lived in places she might have visited.

ix. The poet, the film star, doubling and literary celebrity

[127] Sochineniia, I, 263.

[128] My Half Century, pp. 76 and 81.

Akhmatova's interest in film was undoubtedly fuelled in the 1950s and 60s by her friendship with Aleksei Batalov (whom she had known since he was a child) and his family. Batalov had become an internationally famous figure, one of the most successful Soviet actors of the Thaw period, star of Letiat zhuravli (The Cranes are Flying, dir. Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957) and of Mikhail Romm's Deviat' dnei odnogo goda (Nine Days of One Year,1962). Akhmatova's scenario indicates that she had Batalov in mind for the part of K., and another celebrated Soviet actor, Innokentii Smoktunovskii, who made his debut in Deviat' dnei as Batalov's co-star, for that of Vasia.

Nadezhda Mandel'sham reacted negatively to what she saw as Akhmatova's excessive adulation of Batalov:

> I was irritated by the praise she lavished on Batalov, the film actor. She talked, incidentally, less about his quality as an actor than about the fact that he was the most famous one in the world. I doubt this, but even if he was, why should we care whether someone is famous or not? Public success impresses me about as much as last year's snow, and it upset me that in her old age even Akhmatova showed a weakness for this kind of thing.[129]

It is revealing, in terms of its connection with late style, that Nadezhda Mandel'shtam associates Akhmatova's 'weakness for this kind of thing'; that is, her interest in figures with prominent public profiles, with her advancing years.

The suspicion towards celebrity expressed by Nadezhda Mandel'shtam was typical of the Russian creative intelligentsia and conforms to broader European models of authorship, which -- as part of a Romantic legacy -- made a distinction between transcendent genius and vulgar celebrity:

> The popular theme of neglected genius, with its focus on posthumous reputation over debased contemporary celebrity, was not only a means for artists to understand

[129] Hope Abandoned, p. 318.

alienation or commercial failure, but could also be invoked by the relatively successful to avoid being associated too strongly with such celebrity -- the appearance of reticence and neglect itself became part of the mechanism of fame.[130]

The archetypal expression of this in the Russian context is a poem of 1956 by Pasternak:

Быть знаменитым некрасиво.

Не это подымает ввысь.

[...]

Цель творчества самоотдача,

А не шумиха, не успех.

Позорно ничего не знача,

Быть притчей на устах у всех.[131]

[To be famous is unseemly./It does not elevate to great heights./[...]The aim of art is the giving of oneself,/And not sensation, not success./It is shameful, signifying nothing,/To be a name on everybody's lips.]

Batalov was indeed not the most famous actor in the world (the exaggeration and use of the superlative is typical of Akhmatova), but he certainly commanded significant public attention in the Soviet Union and received recognition abroad, particularly after Letiat zhuravli (1957) won the Palme d'Or at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival. Akhmatova's scenario pays homage to Batalov's films intertextually (another instance of 'celebrity gifting'): as Pakhareva points out, both the scenario and

[130] Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, Politics, London and New York, 2005, p. 4.

[131] Stikhotvoreniia i poemy, 2 vols, ed. V. S. Babaev and E. B. Pasternak, Leningrad, 1990, 2, p. 88.

Letiat zhuravli are set in wartime, and each examine good and evil through the theme of rivalry and the motif of doubles.[132]

The importance of doubles in the scenario signals a connection with the fiction of Fedor Dostoevskii.[133] The scene in which N. buries documents on behalf of someone else for money is headed 'Prehistory', indicating a narrative technique which Akhmatova identified with Dostoevskii.[134] Allusions to his work are scattered throughout the scenario, which presents a psychological crime story and has particularly strong generic correspondences with Prestuplenie i nakazanie (Crime and Punishment,1866), as is made explicit by a reference to the murder of an old woman with an axe.[135]

[132] Pakhareva, p. 55.

[133] Despite the many points of contact with Dostoevskii in Akhmatova's writing and the admiration for him that she often expressed in conversation, a sustained investigation of the Dostoevskian contexts of her work remains to be undertaken, although a number of critics have highlighted aspects of the relationship, including: Ivailo Petrov, 'Dostoevskii i tvorchestvo Anny Akhmatovoi', Slavica, 21,1983, pp. 161-70; E. A. Shestakova, 'Akhmatova i Dostoevskii (k postanovke problemy)', in Novye aspekty v izuchenii Dostoevskogo, ed. V. N. Zakharov, Petrozavodsk, 1994, pp. 335-54; Alexandra K Harrington, 'Finding Form for Chaos: Dostoevsky's The Adolescent and Akhmatova's Poem Without a Hero', in Sarah Young and Lesley Milne (eds), Dostoevsky on the Threshold of Other Worlds: Essays in Honour of Malcolm V. Jones, Ilkeston, 2006, pp. 46-63.

[134] She connects it with him in her elegy, 'Predystoriia' ('Prehistory', 1940-43), and in her academic writing on Pushkin: see Akhmatova, Sochineniia, ed. V. A. Chernykh, 2 vols, Moscow, 1986, 2, p. 127. She spoke of it to Chukovskaia in October 1957, singling out Prestuplenie i nakazanie as an exception to Dostoevskii's other novels in not establishing a prehistory for the main action (2, p. 281). She also observes approvingly in one of her notebooks of 1963 that Prestuplenie i nakazanie is 'anti-Sherlock Holmes' in that the author discloses who killed whom, and why, from the outset, and does not 'sully' the reader (ne pachkaet) by turning him/her into a participant in a detective story (Zapisnye knizhki, p. 169). She clearly planned something similar for her scenario, not concealing the fact that N. is a murderer whose motive is a pathological envy of K.

[135] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 297. The blind mother dreams that Igor' attacks her with an axe.

The idea of a 'beautiful life', for which Akhmatova specifies that N. needs money, introduces a further Dostoevskian touch which chimes with the themes of doubles, murder, morality, unchecked ambition, and conscience in the scenario more broadly.[136] The idea of acquiring money through violence or criminal means as an integral part of realising dreams and ambitions for a future, better life is a key idea in Dostoevskii's fiction, part of a 'Napoleonic' theme drawn from Aleksandr Pushkin's 'Pikovaia dama' ('The Queen of Spades', 1833) and elaborated most extensively in Prestuplenie i nakazanie.

Akhmatova's treatment of the theme of doubles lends itself to being interpreted in relation to the theme of celebrity and fame. Leo Braudy observes of nineteenth-century doubles fiction:

> Such stories [...] of doubles who are released only to attack the "normal" self, can easily be read as fantasies of uncontrollable ambition, the desire for fame in the present with the full understanding of its fragility and insubstantiality, the search for recognition and visibility with the fearful awareness of its emptiness.[137]

Akhmatova's scenario can viably be read through this prism. Both K., a popular celebrity-hero, and N., the usurping imposter whose ruthless, uncontrolled ambition and envy lead him to assume K.'s identity, can be interpreted as doubles of Akhmatova as author, and as representing different facets of the phenomenon of celebrity.

K. is a state hero representing celebrity and public visibility of a specifically Soviet, officially-endorsed, kind. He garners the kind of positive media-fuelled public attention that was not accessible to Akhmatova, since the kind of mass image manufacture that the text describes was a commodity of the regime, which decided who was worthy of society's gaze and controlled access to

[136] The phrase appears in Chekhov's 'Dama s sobachkoi' ('Lady with a Lapdog', 1899), in the film version of which (dir. Iosif Kheifits, 1960) Batalov played the character of Gurov.

[137] The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History, New York, 1997, p. 466.

the necessary means of publicising them and reproducing their images.[138] Akhmatova's pre-Revolutionary celebrity and popularity, along with her projection of herself as extraordinary individual through poems which ostensibly focussed attention on her private life, had rendered her ideologically problematic in a political culture that was based on the idea of the collective, so that she was anathematized and made notorious in negative campaigns of the 1920s and 1940s through the same media that state-sanctioned heroic figures were feted. K.'s positive celebrity is effectively the flip-side, or obverse, of Akhmatova's notoriety: Chris Rojek defines celebrity precisely as the 'attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere'.[139]

For all the manifest contrasts between Akhmatova and K. in terms of their relationships to power and respective fields of achievement, the complex confusion between the public and private life that is a feature of any celebrity makes it viable to read some of Akhmatova's anxieties about her own situation into her representation of K. Any form of immediate fame makes the bearer vulnerable, exposed, and accessible to the eyes of others, and this idea is dramatized in Akhmatova's scenario, generating its plot – it is K.'s celebrity and public visibility that expose him to N.'s jealousy and thereby lead to his death. N. apparently knows K. not as a private individual but only as a public figure, through media texts. He is an 'image' in the sense that Richard Dyer uses the term - not an exclusively visual sign but rather 'a complex configuration of visual, verbal and aural signs', which 'may constitute the general image of stardom or of a particular star'.[140] N. envies K. and his celebrity to the point of destroying him physically and insinuating himself into K.'s private, domestic life. In doing so, he takes on all the paraphernalia of his cult, the external trappings of his fame, so that these are revealed as arbitrary, transferable, and removed from the real person to whom they are supposed to attach. This highlights the fact that the public image is simply a persona, a pose -- and that it is reproducible, despite apparently resting on an individual's uniqueness. As Braudy observes,

[138] ibid., p. 594.

[139] Rojek, p. 10.

[140] Dyer, p. 34.

'once a group of gestures is made, they can be reproduced and refined by others'.[141] That this is the case is underscored by Akhmatova's reflection upon the phenomenon of fandom through the character of Ania, who is obsessed with K.'s charismatic screen image and heroic masculinity. Ania's infatuation with K. cannot be equated with love for a real person: it is based upon admiration for the external markers of his heroism and media representations of him. As Ania describes watching K. at the cinema, seeing him smile (presumably on screen or in a staged public appearance), N., posing as K., says to her: 'Swear that you love me not because of this (he points to his medal) and not because of the cinema...nor the smile'.[142] In short, in the scenario draft such as it exists, K. as a 'real' person is actually missing altogether. He is all image. Although his domestic sphere is represented, this is only after his death. He features in the text primarily as a representation of a public figure, and is dealt with solely in terms of this signification and how he is known to others through various forms of mass production and reproduction – photography, sculpture, newspaper articles, newsreel, and so on. In this respect he is a cipher standing for the semiotics or iconography of fame. This aspect of the text is multi-layered, in fact, because of the designation of Batalov as the ideal actor to play this role: he was best known for portraying noble, positive heroic figures, and this fed into public perceptions of him as a star, so that he was associated with his screen roles.

In the light of the above, N.'s studied imitation of K.'s gestures can productively be read as a literalization of the performance, role-playing and repetition that are perennial features of fame. The doubling of Akhmatova as author can therefore be thought of not only in relation to K., but also N., and conceived in terms of the 'uncontrolled ambition' described by Braudy, who observes that in doubles fiction, 'the most implacable rival for early success, undercutting every achievement, is not

[141] Frenzy of Renown, p. 55.

[142] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 299.

really another person but an aspect, higher or lower, of oneself – one's own sense of the compromises and self-warpings that ambition and the urge for recognition entail'.[143]

N's imitation of a public figure or celebrity and its consequences can be interpreted as an exploration of what is involved psychologically and personally in creating a self in front of an audience, fashioning a persona, performing a public role. Stephen Greenblatt observes that 'Self-fashioning always involves some experience of threat, some effacement or undermining, some loss of self' and highlights the condition of 'perpetual self-estrangement' that comes of 'living life as a character'.[144] Self-fashioning, he goes on to remark, involves bringing into being 'multiple shadowy selves', behind which a 'darker shadow' lurks -- that of the 'dream of a cancellation of identity itself'.[145] Again, this idea is made literal and dramatized in the scenario: N. becomes increasingly self-estranged as he performs the role of K., eventually not recognising himself in the mirror and shooting drunkenly at his own shadow.

Goldman observes that celebrity 'makes the self contingent; identity depends on an audience for its continued existence, turning the individual into a stereotype, condemned to perform itself until death'.[146] The individual psychological subject is turned in the process into an object, lacking agency. This has clear parallels with Akhmatova's own situation: the evidence of many contemporaries makes it abundantly clear that "Akhmatova" was an expected role that she felt required to perform. Naiman observes that publicly, 'she was not Anna Andreeva but, more formally, Anna Akhmatova. She had to behave like "Akhmatova", and did so', and he suggests that she thought in terms of 'the phenomenon and concept of "Anna Akhmatova"'.[147] Nadezhda

[143] Frenzy of Renown, p. 485.

[144] Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare, Chicago, IL, 1980, pp. 9 and 31.

[145] ibid., p. 32.

[146] Modernism, p. 1.

[147] Naiman, pp. 109-10 and 211.

Mandel'shtam indicates that this experience of a public self was a strain, describing the poet's increasing weariness of 'figuring' as Akhmatova and her desire to 'escape' her name.[148]

The principal allegation levelled against the culture of the 1910s in Poema is that everyone is acting a part, playing a role, wearing a mask. This pervasive performance blurs fantasy and reality to an extent that has serious consequences for the individual's sense of self, destroying personality. Wendy Rosslyn detects in Poema an expression of 'the fear that role-playing merely conceals the void where the self should be.'[149] Akhmatova's scenario similarly suggests that role-playing has serious repercussions, leading potentially to madness and a negation of self.

The 'emptiness that comes from living exclusively in the eye of others', as Braudy puts it, or the 'void in the subject', to use Apter's formulation, is frequently noted by commentators on celebrity.[150] Alexander Zholkovsky detects this emptiness in Akhmatova, seeing her as excelling at 'self-centred play-acting' at the same time as exhibiting a 'personal void often found in actors'.[151] At the height of Akhmatova's early fame (1922), Nikolai Punin wrote in his diary: 'So empty (pustynna) -- not her outer life, -- people don't bow to anyone as they do to her, -- rather the inside; her life itself is so empty, so that it sometimes even makes me afraid.[152]

The scenario not only displays an intense anxiety about what Dyer calls 'the validity of autonomous identity', raising the suspicion that 'we may only be our "performance"', and articulating a profound fear that there is in fact no essential or authentic self at all.[153] It also

[148] Hope Abandoned, p. 449.

[149] ''Not a Whiff of a Roman Carnival'': Akhmatova's Poema bez geroia', in Cynthia Marsh and Wendy Rosslyn (eds), Russian and Yugoslav Culture in the Age of Modernism, Nottingham, 1991, pp. 69-89 (p. 79).

[150] Frenzy of Renown, p. 6; Apter, p. 95.

[151] Zholkovsky, pp. 138 and 139.

[152] Mir svetel liubov'iu: Dnevniki. Pis'ma, ed. L. A. Zykov, Moscow, 2000, p. 162.

[153] Dyer, p. 21.

discloses other authorial anxieties: the central plot elements can be read, for instance, as expressive of a nagging psychological fear of unworthiness, or fraudulence (a corollary of the idea that fame is reproducible and only arbitrarily attached to its bearer). N. is a pretender, not an original -- he resembles a famous person superficially, but does not possess his unique qualities or talents. He is a double, not in the sense of being an aspect of K.'s self or psychological splitting (as in nineteenth-century doubles fiction), but only in terms of being a pale imitation, a debased version, or simulacrum. This can be interpreted in relation to the reproducibility and superficiality of celebrity, but also in connection with the problems involved in creating a fictionalized, written version of the self. Braudy comments that doubling is inherent to the act of writing and, by extension, to authorship itself: 'another doubleness every nineteenth-century writer invited each time he put pen to paper was the ambiguous commerce of making public a private act of feeling'.[154] In Akhmatova's case, her Romantic 'hermeneutic of intimacy' is geared towards creating the impression that the poems give access to an exceptionally interesting individual, but this access, and that individual, are only imagined, so that there is an inherent tension between the self and the self in writing. Similarly, in high modernism, the author is a distinctive 'imprimatur' that resides in the style of the text itself, so that he or she is not a personality as such but a linguistic projection of an idealized author figure. Akhmatova emphasises this in Poema by distributing the authorial 'I' across different levels of the text and repeatedly hinting (through self-quotation and intertextuality) that these selves are merely textual representations of an author. She remarks, for instance, that everything doubles and triples, including the author, and asks, 'Gde sama ia i gde tol'ko ten'?' ('Where am I myself, and where only a shadow?'[155] The 'real' author is impossible to locate.

Another possible reading encoded in the scenario is that the imposter who usurps the image of a famous person is an oblique expression of Akhmatova's fear about the false image that can

[154] Frenzy of Renown, p. 484.

[155] Harrington, Anna Akhmatova, pp. 232-39.

potentially be created after death, and of the loss of control over self-representation that death will bring. At the end of the 1950s, she wrote:

> Viacheslav Ivanov, who left Petersburg for good in 1912, took with him the impression that I was somehow connected with Kuzmin […] and, of course, when he was asked about me abroad, he said I was Kuzmin's pupil. That is how this half-double, half-werewolf, which had peacefully lived in somebody's conception of me all these decades, and which had no contact with me or my real fate, was put into motion. One unwittingly asks the question how many doubles or werewolves like this are wandering around the world and what will their ultimate role be.[156]

Here, false rumours are conceived precisely in terms of damaging, evil doubles that take on a life of their own.

Finally, the scenario can plausibly be interpreted as an exploration of Akhmatova's personalized struggle with Stalin. The representation of K.'s personality cult in the text immediately calls to mind the leader's own and given that, as outlined above, it is possible on the basis of the textual evidence to read both K. and N. as authorial doubles, there is ambiguity as to whether Akhmatova's text succeeds in exposing the cult of the leader as empty or reveals ambition on her part to rival and exceed it. In 1961, she implicitly contrasts her own position with that of Stalin:

> During the period of the personality cult my name was banned, abuse flowed like water over a waterfall, my portraits were removed from the walls during searches, and Pasternak barely managed to persuade the editorial board of New World to allow my name to be printed over his poem that was addressed to me.[157]

Alexander Zholkovsky has suggested that Akhmatova suffered from a form of Stockholm Syndrome: despite her implacable moral opposition to Stalin's regime, he argues, she was effectively

[156] My Half Century, p. 20.

[157] ibid., p. 56.

a prisoner of it, and this led her to internalize and emulate its typical strategies in her own behaviour. He regards her as a 'power-smart' contemporary of Stalinism' who was explicit about 'managing her own cult'.[158] Even though it is tempting in the light of this to see the theme of doubles as indicative of Akhmatova's envy of Stalin's fame and rivalry with him, Zholkovsky's Stalinist metaphor is ultimately problematic -- partly because it suggests some sort of equivalence between Akhmatova's conduct and the operations of a totalitarian state, which is an ethically dubious association, but also because it obscures the extent to which Akhmatova's later mythmaking developed in a way that was consistent with her own earlier self-fashioning.

Zholkovsky does, however, usefully bring to the foreground the issue of power, convincingly identifying a 'power dominant' in Akhmatova's personality.[159] Various commentators on fame and celebrity, including Braudy and Marshall, point out that fame always involves the articulation and exercise of power of some kind.[160] Akhmatova and Mandel'shtam saw themselves as fighting a kind of civil war against official culture, and ensuring that their memory was perpetuated was crucial to this.[161] As Greenblatt remarks, 'any individual or group confronting a hostile institution that possesses vastly superior force, has recourse to the weapon of the powerless: the seizure of symbolic initiative'.[162] Celebrity and fame, which conferred symbolic power, were thus a feature of the ideological battleground in the Soviet Union.

x. Conclusion

[158] Zholkovsky, pp. 141 and 136.

[159] ibid., p. 138.

[160] Frenzy of Renown, p. 3; Marshall, pp. ix and 73.

[161] See Clare Cavanagh, Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West, New Haven, NY, 2009, pp. 109-48.

[162] Greenblatt, pp. 78-79.

Said suggests that late style can produce works that 'exude not so much a spirit of wise resignation' or 'serenity' as stir up anxiety and 'tamper irrevocably with the possibility of closure', citing unfinishedness as a common feature.[163] A repeated emphasis on incompleteness and unfinishability, and insistence on the paradoxical legitimacy of drafts and variants, is a distinctive feature of Akhmatova's later period. Serova observes that this causes us to revise our understanding of the terms 'fragment', 'rough draft' and so on, because they function not in a traditional sense but as genre designations.[164] The impression conveyed (by its very frequency) that this was an intentional strategy on Akhmatova's part is supported by Mandel'shtam's essay 'Conversation about Dante' (1933), in which he asserts that 'rough drafts are never destroyed' and that their safety is the 'statute assuring preservation of the power behind the literary work.'[165]

The point here is not that the scenario is intentionally left unfinished (and a close examination of it does not support this as a possible conclusion, since it is so sketchily written), but rather that it can fruitfully be thought of as part of a broader creative impulse and new aesthetic that accords drafts and creative experiments important status and involves a 'deliberately unproductive productiveness going against…', as Said puts it, which can 'tear apart the career and the artist's craft and reopen the questions of meaning, success, and progress that the artist's late period is supposed to move beyond'.[166]

These questions - of meaning, success, and progress – all preoccupied Akhmatova in her later years and led her to embark upon a project of self-reinvention that in its turn prompted

[163] Said, p. 7.

[164] <http://www.akhmatova.org/articles/serova9.htm> [last accessed 10 December 2015].

[165] 'Conversation about Dante', in Osip Mandelstam, The Collected Critical Prose and Letters, ed. Jane Gary Harris, London, 1991, pp. 397-442 (pp. 415 and 416).

[166] Said, p. 7.

reflection on the cost of self-fashioning and the nature of celebrity, informing the plot of her cinema scenario and giving rise to its central themes, as well as its aesthetics.

The evidence relating to Akhmatova shows that celebrity and a concern with reputation, with the overall shape and meaning of a career, at the end of the writer's life, can be a factor in the development of late style. Her own late style is intimately related to her preoccupation, exacerbated by old age, ill health, and the confused political climate of the Thaw, with her immediate fame or celebrity, her posthumous reputation, and the coherence of her creative trajectory. Akhmatova's particular case is instructive because it demonstrates that a concern with fame and reception can be closely bound up with a sense of mortality and impending death -- the 'human episode' or 'problematic' which engenders late style in Said's analysis. The experience of celebrity and awareness of mortality each have the potential to engender a sense of fragility and vulnerability, together perhaps all the more so, and it is notable in this respect that the scenario deals not only with the theme of celebrity, but frequently invokes the idea of bodily deterioration, mutilation, damage, and death: Vasia is injured, the mother figure is blind, N. is wounded in the eye and breaks his leg, K. is murdered.

Said includes no female figures in his discussion of late style, thereby implying (even if unintentionally) that 'late style' is the exclusive preserve of male creative artists. Similarly, Braudy's history of fame concentrates on famous men.[167] A focus on Akhmatova -- a woman poet who was anathematized and silenced at the height of her popularity, embarked upon a late period of complex self-reinvention and creative experimentation (which accompanied and possibly contributed to her failing health), measured her worth against male writers, and successfully inscribed herself into a male tradition of Russian literary fame during the course of a long career, provides scope to think about literary celebrity and 'late style' from a gender perspective.

[167] Frenzy of Renown, p. 596.

xi. Post Script: the blind mother

But what was the 'main thing', if, as Akhmatova's note suggests, the themes of fame and fear were not to be developed further in the scenario? The reading through the lens of celebrity above does not explore the figure of the blind mother in any detail. Like Ania, she is established as an authorial double by Akhmatova through self-quotation. The motif of blindness relates the scenario intertextually to Pasternak's unfinished play, Slepaia krasavitsa (1959-60), written in the immediate aftermath of the Zhivago affair. The play features a blind character, Lusha, and incorporates fame as a significant theme: its hero is Lusha's son, a talented serf actor, who is able to call upon the services of a 'famous European doctor' once he has himself achieved fame, and have his mother cured.[168]

One of the characters in Pasternak's play is Alexandre Dumas, whose novels were immensely popular in Russia (where he lived for a brief period from 1859). This French connection brings to mind another possible source for the plot of Akhmatova's scenario -- the case of sixteenth-century peasant Martin Guerre, which features in Dumas' substantial *Celebrated Crimes* (1839-41) and was fictionalized in his novel *The Two Dianas* (1846). Several years after Guerre had left home, a man claiming to be him, who resembled Guerre physically and knew many details of his life, 'returned', but was subsequently proven to be an imposter. As in Akhmatova's text, the imposter was acknowledged by Guerre's wife, but not by his mother. Eventually, following the real Martin Guerre's return (with a wooden leg, which chimes with the theme of mutilation in Akhmatova's text), the imposter confessed that, having been mistaken for Guerre by others because of his close physical resemblance to him (again, this parallels Akhmatova's scenario), he decided to take on his identity.[169]

[168] Karen Evans Romaine,'Pasternak and Tchaikovsky: Musical Echoes in Pasternak's Blind Beauty', in Literature and Musical Adaptation, ed. by Michael J. Meyer, Amsterdam and New York, 2002, pp. 105-36 (p. 109).

[169] See Natalie Zemon Davis, The Return of Martin Guerre, Cambridge, 1983.

A lyric of 1906 by Sergei Gorodetskii, Akhmatova's fellow Acmeist, suggests itself as another possible intertext with a bearing on the figure of the blind mother:

Слепая мать глядит в окно,

Весне морщинками смеется.

Но сердце, горю отдано,

Больней на солнце бьется.

Не надо света и красы!

Не надо вешней благодати!

Считает мертвые часы

Мой сын в далеком каземате.[170]

[The blind mother looks out of the window,/Laughs at spring with her wrinkles./But her heart, given over to grief/Beats more painfully in the sun.//There is no need for light and beauty!/No need of spring plenitude!/My son is counting his mortal hours/In a distant prison cell.]

The final two lines have a clear biographical resonance for Akhmatova -- they call to mind the incarceration of her son, Lev Gumilev, and articulate the principal theme of Rekviem – a mother's suffering while her son is in prison.

Lev was released from the camps in 1958 and, in subsequent years, he and his mother had several serious arguments and became increasingly estranged. In January 1962, Akhmatova described to Chukovskaia the fundamental changes the camps effected in Lev: 'He is a sick person. They damaged his soul there. They suggested: your mother is so famous (znamenitaia), she only had to say the word, and you'd have been home', and she told Emma Gershtein, 'He wasn't like that

[170] Stikhotvoreniia i poemy, ed. by S. I. Mashinskii, Leningrad, 1974, p. 143.

before. They made him like that.'[171] The idea at the centre of the plot of 'O letchikakh' -- of an imposter returning home in place of the mother's real son -- thus lends itself irresistibly to a biographical reading.

As to why the scenario remained unfinished: S. A. Kovalenko suggests that the reason that Akhmatova did not persist with it was that the corrupt figure at its centre ceased to be psychologically interesting.[172] Another more mundane reason also suggests itself, however. As mentioned earlier, Chukovskaia records on 26 May 1963 that Akhmatova had read her scenario to Batalov and his family that morning. The last scene Akhmatova drafted is dated 24 May, and she did not revisit the text after reading it to Batalov on May 26. These facts lend themselves to the circumstantial conclusion that the reaction of her celebrity friend was not sufficiently positive for Akhmatova to feel encouraged to pursue her screenplay.

[171] Chukovskaia, 2, p. 493; Memuari, St Petersburg, 1998, p. 252.

[172] Sobranie sochinenii, 3, p. 447.